

The Future Millennial Kingdom of Christ

Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66

Isaiah 65:17-25 - *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create, for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people. The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. ²⁰ “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days. For the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.*

²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble, for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

²⁴ “It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord.”

Background Notes

In the first half of Isaiah 65 we studied the Lord’s response to Isaiah’s prayer on behalf of Israel that was recorded in Isaiah 63 and 64. In Isaiah 65 and 66 there are a number of details about the Millennium. In the last section of Isaiah 66 there are more details about that blessed future when the Lord returns.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Millennium will merge with Eternity (Isaiah 65:17-25).

Does the term *“new heavens and a new earth”* (v17) refer to the Millennium - or to the Eternal State? According to 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21, it appears that this phrase refers to the Eternal State. Why then did Isaiah seem to use that term for the Millennium (v17)? As we’ve mentioned before, many times when Isaiah and other prophets looked to the future, from their perspective the future events that they predicted were not distinct – they were “fused together.” Only with the future revelation of the New Testament do we see that the Millennium is distinct. It precedes the new heavens and the new earth.

So in Isaiah 65 Isaiah looked forward to the details of the millennial kingdom of Christ, which will lead up to and merge with the new heavens and new earth of the Eternal State. In the Millennium, the effects of the curse that came upon mankind and the earth because of sin will be greatly lifted. But it will not be completely removed, as it will be in the new

heavens and new earth, when there will be no more death or dying (Revelation 21:4). In the Millennium there will be death, but people will live a lot longer – more like trees (v20). The Millennium will be a time of great peace and prosperity (v21-23). In the Millennium, hindrances and barriers to prayer will be removed (v24).

In the light of the rest of Scripture, believers can apply verse 24 today - but *in context*, it referenced the Millennium. During the Millennium, the dangers of the natural world will be removed, as even the animal world will be at peace (v25). The Millennium is not the new heaven and new earth - but the Millennium will merge with Eternity.

2. The Millennium will follow judgment.

Isaiah 66:1-6 - *“Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? ² For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,” says the Lord. “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word. ³ “He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man. He who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog’s neck. He who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine’s blood. He who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, ⁴ so will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them, because, when I called, no one answered. When I spoke they did not hear, but they did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight.”*

⁵ Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word. “Your brethren who hated you, who cast you out for My name’s sake, said, ‘Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy.’ But they shall be ashamed.” ⁶ The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord, who fully repays His enemies!”

The practice of ritualistic religion – with no true heart worship of the Lord - is detestable and despicable to the Lord (v1-3). Without a contrite spirit, going to the Temple means nothing! Slaying sacrifices becomes like murder. Sacrificial lambs and grain offerings become like unclean dogs and pigs’ blood. Burning incense becomes idolatry. God will judge those who practice mere “ritualistic” religion (v4-6).

This rebuke has plenty of application for people who practice “ritualistic religion” today. Merely attending church as a religious ritual will not earn salvation. It also applies to those who will perpetrate the sin of persecuting the godly Jewish remnant in the future. The judgment of verse 6 would be fulfilled with the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians, and later by the Romans - but judgment will also fall in the future when the Lord returns at the end of the Tribulation period. Judgment will be similar to the occasions when the Lord cleansed the Temple and threw out the money changers who were involved in corrupt “worship.” Only then can peace and blessing of the Lord’s millennial kingdom be established. The Millennium will follow judgment.

3. The Millennium will favor restored Israel.

Isaiah 66:7-14 - *“Before she was in labor, she gave birth. Before her pain came, she delivered a male child. ⁸ Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. ⁹ Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?” says the Lord. “Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?” says your God.*

¹⁰ “Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her - ¹¹ that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom - that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.” ¹² For thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed. On her sides shall you be carried, and be dandled on her knees. ¹³ As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” ¹⁴ When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass. The hand of the Lord shall be known to His servants, and His indignation to His enemies.”

The “*she*” in verse 8 is Zion - Jerusalem, the capital of the nation of Israel. Notice that before she travailed, she gave birth to a male child (singular, v7), but when she travailed, she gave birth to children, her sons (plural, v8). The time of Israel's travailing will culminate in the Tribulation period of the future, which Jeremiah called “*the time of Jacob's trouble*” (*Jeremiah 30:7*).

Before that time of travailing, Israel gave birth to a male child, singular - obviously a reference to the Messiah. And when she travails, Israel will give birth to children, plural. These “children” will be the restored Israel of the future, coming out of the Tribulation period and entering the Millennium. Both the Land and the nation will be restored (v8). A highly figurative description of the blessings of the Millennium was recorded in verses 10-14, when restored Israel will be favored. The Millennium will favor restored Israel.

4. The Millennium will distinguish the sheep from the goats.

In Matthew 25 the Lord said that He will gather together all nations for judgment when He returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation period. This judgment is known as “the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats.” In this judgment, the sheep and the goats will not be the nations themselves, but individuals within the nations. The “sheep” are the saved and the “goats” are the lost. Notice how closely this passage in Matthew ties together with this final chapter of Isaiah.

Isaiah 66:15-21 - *“For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶ For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many. ¹⁷ “Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst; eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse shall be consumed together,” says the Lord. ¹⁸ “For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. ¹⁹ I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul*

and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. ²⁰ Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the Lord, “as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. ²¹ And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites,” says the Lord.”

The return of the Lord and the judgment of the ungodly, not only in Israel, but all the nations, were seen in verses 15-18. Notice how all nations will be gathered (v18) just as in Matthew 25, for the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats. In Isaiah 66:19, the sheep (the saved Gentiles) will enter the millennial kingdom, and go out to the far corners of the earth to declare the glory of the Lord to Jews and Gentile alike: “...*those among them who escape I will send to the nations... to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.*” We don’t know what the supernatural sign of verse 19 will be, but it seems that some miraculous manifestation will confirm the ministry of the sheep, the saved Gentiles.

The worldwide witness of verse 19 is not the same as worldwide witness of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of the Tribulation period. No. Verse 19 is the worldwide witness of the saved Gentiles, the “sheep,” after the return of the Lord. And the saved Gentiles will help the saved Jews return to Jerusalem to become part of the restored Israel (v20). In verse 21, the “*some of them*” may refer to Gentiles, but it probably refers to the great number of saved Jews who will return to Jerusalem at the start of the millennial kingdom. In any case, verses 22-23 predicted that throughout the 1000-year millennial kingdom and on to Eternity, both saved Jews and saved Gentiles will worship the Lord!

Isaiah 66:24 - “*And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.*” Verse 24 may be a reference to the “goats” of Matthew 25 - the living unbelievers who will be judged and given the death penalty at the end of the Tribulation period. Obviously they will not enter the millennial kingdom. This last verse of Isaiah 66 is not an easy verse of Scripture to interpret, but one thing is sure – the Millennium will distinguish the “sheep” from the “goats.”

Practical Application

Don’t confuse *interpretation* and *application*.

Some commentators feel that Isaiah 66:24 describes the Eternal State, because the Lord quoted of the last part of this verse about hell: “*where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9). So - was Isaiah 66:24 teaching that forever in Heaven, believers will view those who are suffering in hell? No. We believe the Lord was only making an *application* from Isaiah 66:24. The Lord used this verse to *illustrate* the terrible conditions of hell, by referring to the continual fires of the worm-infested dumping grounds outside Jerusalem in the Hinnom Valley (Gehenna).

So be careful with Bible interpretation. **Don’t confuse *interpretation* and *application*!**